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CARE OF ANIMALS AT SCHOOL

"I think it's mean to wish the bees on the kindergarten for pets. They can't have near the fun with the bees that we can have with Billy," was the comment of a fourth grader, hitching up the fourth-grade goat for his daily stroll along the borders of Lincoln Park. But in spite of the fact that there can be no pleasurable personal contact between the kindergarten and its pets, there is an observation-hive in the kindergarten room where the children may see the bees working during the fall and spring. Watching the bees' activity is merely an incidental part of the kindergarten work. The children, of course, have no share in caring for them. All during the winter months, the bees are hibernating away from the kindergarten room, but with the coming of spring the hive is returned and the children watch through the glass sides of the hive the bees bringing back pollen from the park flowers.

The special pets of the first grade are doves and fishes, but they have other pets occasionally, such as tadpoles, turtles, and crayfish. In taking care of these living things, the children gain some sense of responsibility. John said, "It is only my business to take care of the fish, but I know how to take care of the doves, too." The work is always sought after and seldom neglected. During the nesting season the doves are watched with much interest, for the father-dove takes an active part in sitting on the eggs and feeding the little ones, and as they grow very rapidly, they require a great deal of attention. Giving fresh water to the fish, and watching them devour the bits of food thrown to them is always enjoyed, but real amusement is derived from a visit from the mother Crayfish, for it is such fun to see her sweep the air with her antennae or nip a pencil in her great clumsy claws, or take her food in them and push it into her mouth with little mouth-feet. The children love to watch her as she walks backward, and look at her with wonder as she draws in her bead-like eyes if she thinks danger is near, or pushes them out to see if she can escape. The most curious thing of all is the neat little nest which she makes by curling up her tail under her. Sometimes the clay models of animals are very much alive in the imagination of the first-grade children. One day Robert had made a "great" walrus

of clay, and had put it in the sea in the sand table. He said, "Now there will be something doing, since my walrus has come." Benjamin replied, "Well, something will be doing when I put my killer whale in there."

The rabbits are taken care of by the third-grade children under the supervision of a teacher. Two children are appointed to the rabbit committee and then make a report to the grade each week. One of the earlier "reports" bears the title *Rabbits*, and is as follows:

We have Rabbits. The hutch was wet and they were not to be seen. There is a tunnel that leads to a house underground. We called them. The straw was on the floor. John and I had put in foods. I had brought cabbage and they jumped around me. When I put it down, they jumped at it and ate it.

One journalistic third-grade child writes:

Third-Grade Rabbit News

Our rabbits have cute and cunning ways. One day when I went in their pen, I found that they had gnawed at the timber of the door, and at the strip of the wood that kept the door from going in too far. Once we put in a lot of straw. The next day when I came in, it was all gone! They had eaten it all up.

The rabbit news does not always come in this dramatic form. Many reports take the diary form.

Our rabbits were so glad when we came back from vacation. When we came to the door, they jumped up on us, and they were so hungry they could hardly wait. When I opened the door, one of the rabbits ran out and I could hardly catch him, and he had quite a little run. At last we got him into the pen.

* * * *

We got the rakes and cleaned the pen and put the fresh hay in. I enjoy taking care of the rabbits very much.

* * * *

When we went out to the rabbits, they were as lively as ever. We gave them two boxes of oats, so that if they should be fed late they would have enough to eat.

Another diary, somewhat later, goes as follows:

When Jean brought the food from the kitchen it was lettuce. And oh! how those rabbits did eat. We could hardly keep them away while I cleaned the pan.

* * * *

Today the rabbits were so funny. They would march around the hut

one after another, till at last it got so narrow up jumped one of the rabbits on the roof.

With practice in tending the rabbits, the third-grade pupils acquire what may be called "rabbit technique." When the rabbits were donated, someone observed, "rabbits nibble all the time," so for the first few days the committee felt obliged to visit their charges twice a day. Presently, larger pans for the water, grain, and green foods were bought at the suggestion of the committee, and a lesson in economy of energy had been gained. But more than economy of energy is learned; commercial thrift is acquired, for the children maintain a thriving business in the sale of young rabbits to members of the school.

Rabbit Report, March 18, 1915

We have new bunnies down in the hole which never appear above ground. About once two days ago I saw one of them. We expected them before, as I have already said, and now we have them. But we are selling them fifty cents apiece.

The fourth-grade goat, to his shame be it said, is not self-supporting as are the rabbits. In former years, his predecessors have achieved economic independence by dragging the second-grade children in a cart under the guidance of the fourth grade. Owing to inconvenient arrangements of play period and to certain accidents to the wagon, this has been discontinued for the present. Although the children this year are losing this particular sort of business experience, in tending the goat there is chance for developing a large interest in work, sense of responsibility, and a practical enlarging of experience. The work, from its novelty, gains a certain charm and is on the whole much desired by the children.

The third-grade plan of choosing a weekly committee is followed. The reports are written up without supervision, and are filed for the grade to see.

The first day we fed him a measureful of oats; we got some fresh water for him; then they took him out at half-past ten and played with him until a quarter to eleven. Then when the other group brought him back, we gave him some alfalfa. That is all I know, because I had a cold and could not go out.

* * * *

Billy Goat's Report

We have to buy some oats for the goat, and we feed him out of a box, and he eats the rabbit's oats. And the wagon is broken. I think the goat

has grown fatter, and we ought to fix his knees. He is a nice goat. His horns have grown longer.

* * * *

The first day Rudolph and myself were sent in to get water. When we got back, the goat and the girls were running along the sidewalk into the school grounds. Next day Miss Greenebaum sent me in to ask Percy for a box. I did not know where to find one, but Roland went and got a big clumsy box which Miss Greenebaum did not approve of, for she said it had a top on, and it ought not to have a top on. Roland and I took it back, but could not find a topless box. The next day I could not go to recess, but the day after, when Miss Greenebaum, Eleanor and myself went into the park, we could only go to the curbstone, for the goat lagged back, and Miss Greenebaum had to slide him by the horns, and he kept saying "Ba-aa-aa." Next day I noticed that his footprints looked like that of a deer. When we came back, Eleanor saw that the goat's water had frozen. I ran hot water on the ice and it took a strange form. I threw the loose piece of ice on the ground, afterwards getting fresh water.

* * * *

We fixed the barn up and cleaned it up on Monday. The goat jumped over the gate when he saw us coming with his food. The wagon is broken because it is not strong.

* * * *

When Louise and I had charge of the goat we took him out for a walk almost every day. We took him up to Fullerton and back through the park to school again. Every day we gave him fresh water and some fresh oats. Then we cleaned the goathouse and hung the harness up on a nail after we had taken the goat out for a walk.

* * * *

The goat got a bad sore on his side, and the wagon is broken, and we ought to tell the third grade not to throw stones or snowballs. Everything is all right in the goathouse, except the boxes ought to be moved.

* * * *

Monday

I got the water while Helen fed the goat. I drove him over to the park and I drove him back. He did not like to leave his house, so, going over, we had to pull him, but going back he went so fast we had to run to keep up with him.

Tuesday

Helen got the water while I fed the goat. We took him over to the park. Helen took him back and I took him over.

Wednesday

I got the water while Helen fed the goat. We took him over to the park.

Thursday

We fed and watered the goat and ran him.

Friday

We fed and watered the goat and ran him.

* * * *

When I was on the goat committee I had a better time than I thought I would have. Stephen Robey and I was on the committee. I was glad to have Stephen on the goat committee because Stephen is one of my best friends. We took turns in carrying water and we fed him every day. Once in a while we would forget who got the water the day before. When such a thing would come up, we both would get the water and we would start all over again. Before we knew, the week was over and that was the end of our turn.



THE GOAT AND HIS ATTENDANTS

Since the beginning of the year there has been a great growth in the children's affection for the goat: it has developed in some cases to the point of jealousy. "I think Billy likes Roberta," remarked the generous Helen. "Oh," Eleanor answered pettishly, "that's only because Roberta wears a plaid dress every day." William, with a mind for philosophic truth, after looking for a long time at the goat, once stated gravely, "You know, I like Billy a lot, now that I'm acquainted with him." And Roberta, whose attraction for the goat had been questioned, murmurs daily, "I do love Billy."

That there is a moral and a social motive in this sort of work is the reason for its being undertaken in the school. In Vol. I of the *Year Book* Miss Enoch's article on *Care of the Chickens* expresses the general pedagogic principles which apply to the care of animals in the school. In the work throughout the grades there is a concerted effort toward developing the social virtues. It is made of course without obviousness, and to the children the care of animals seems a natural part of the school work. The first grade use the animals in their regular activities; they draw pictures of the doves and model in clay the sea animals. Charming water-colors of the fish, they make, too, and formal stencil designs of birds or fish for the curtains which decorate the room. It seems that first-grade children must accept as part of the school environment these creatures, and take them without further analysis. This is true of the second and third grades. The fun of caring for the chickens and rabbits is so engrossing that pedagogic motive is probably unquestioned by the children. In the case of the goat, expediency is the answer to the question which comes forth: "Why do we have to take care of the goat?" "The school accepted him as a gift, and someone has to take care of him," is not a very profound answer, but so far has proven satisfactory. So long as the aspect of the care of animals does not seem strange and queer, the benefits are great to the children. They acquire a sense of administering real things from ordering food for the animals, and from managing the arrangements having to do therewith. Their intimacy with animals develops a sense of responsibility. The work on committees furthers the comradeship between the children which has a dignity greater than that gained on the playground, because it is based on serious constructive work. Perhaps the highest good that comes to the children is the opportunity to know animals. They develop an interest that is more than passing. One of the little boys, a wild, rather unruly child, became so fascinated by taking care of the chickens in second grade that during the summer he saved money from his allowance, foregoing the pleasures of easy-spending, to buy chickens for himself. All during the next year he cared for them conscientiously and earnestly. The growth of serious purpose, the quality of altruistic interest in live things, is the greatest contribution to the child which this type of work can give.